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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 003420

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SUBJECT: BURUNDI SUMMIT POSSIBLE IN LATE AUGUST

REF: PRETORIA 2880 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: PolCounselor Raymond Brown, Reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Regional leaders may convene a high-level Burundi summit August 29 or 30 in Dar es Salaam to witness the signature of an FNL-GOB cease fire agreement, according to ISS Analyst Jan van Eck. Van Eck, a long-time Burundi watcher with close connections to the FNL, says that the FNL might be willing to sign a cease-fire as long as there is agreement to deal with their "other issues." While acknowledging that some of the FNL positions are "maximalist," Van Eck views the lack of GOB flexibility as the biggest impediment to a final deal. Further, the South African facilitator, Charles Nqakula, is not devoting sufficient time to the peace process, van Eck suggested, and their working level defense and intelligence officials are "amateurish." END SUMMARY.

Possible Burundi Summit

¶2. (U) Speaking at an August 11 Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Seminar, Burundi ISS analyst Jan van Eck said that regional leaders, who are likely anxious to show progress after months of negotiations, are discussing holding a high-level Burundi summit in Dar es Salaam August 29 or 30, during which the FNL and Government of Burundi would sign a cease-fire agreement. Van Eck said that the FNL is not ready for a final peace agreement, but may be willing to sign to a "conditional cease-fire" that would become operational following resolution of the outstanding political issues. Van Eck said that Presidents Mbeki, Museveni and others would attend the signing.

¶3. (U) In van Eck's opinion, the main problem with the current FNL talks is the unwillingness of the GOB to negotiate. As the democratically-elected government, the regime does not believe it needs to negotiate with the FNL (or domestic opposition). Van Eck also acknowledges, however, that some of the FNL negotiating positions -- like its demands on the new army -- are "unreasonable" and "maximalist," but believes that any negotiation must involve give and take. Right now, the FNL wants something "concrete" to bring back to their supporters. Van Eck has heard that "some parties" are pressing the GOB to offer FNL head Agathon Rwasa a senior position in government, which could be such a carrot. Van Eck does not believe that the current peace framework should be scrapped, but rather "certain issues should be debated within the framework." Threats to take the FNL to the International Criminal Court through the Tripartite Commission Plus have been "very unhelpful," and create a bad atmosphere for talks.

FNL Modernizing/Expanding

¶ 14. (U) Van Eck, who has spent considerable time with the FNL in Tanzania, said that the months in Dar es Salaam waiting for the GOB were spent "urbanizing," "modernizing," and preparing for the negotiations. The Tanzanians were instrumental in bringing the FNL to Dar es Salaam and remain in close contact with them. Everyone who has met Rwasa has been impressed, although van Eck noted that Rwasa is sick, in large part because of the pressure on him.

¶ 15. (U) More broadly, van Eck believes that the "support and stature" of the FNL is growing "phenominally." The FNL is in close contact with the domestic opposition, as well as some government leaders. While the number of FNL soliders is low, they could mobilize large numbers quickly since the current political environment lends itself easily to recruitment.

South African Mediation Not Focused

¶ 16. (C) Van Eck privately shared with PolOff his frustrations with the South African mediation. Minister Charles Ngakula, the Facilitator of the Burundi Peace Process, is not devoting sufficient time to the talks; he flies in and out of the region without spending enough time with the parties to understand the issues. His right-hand man, Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo is quite good (and close to van Eck), but has been preoccupied by the DRC elections. This leaves a team of inexperienced, working level Defense and Intelligence officials in Dar es Salaam. Van Eck recounted how one of the

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South Africans tried to buy Rwasa's signature on the peace agreement with \$4,000, an amateurish move.

¶ 17. (C/NF) According to a Pretoria-based Belgian diplomat, the South Africans have requested funding from several European governments to support the FNL mediation. France is providing Euro 150,000, and Belgium is considering a Euro 250,000 grant. The Dutch have also made a contribution.

Comment

¶ 18. (C) Van Eck is a long-time "Burundi pessimist," and he is increasingly sympathetic to the FNL perspective on the peace process. We cannot comment on the accuracy of his views on the situation in Burundi, but he remains an excellent source for insights into FNL thinking and retains significant influence over the South African mediation through his personal connection to Ambassador Kingsley Mamabolo. We recommend staying in touch with him both in South Africa and Dar es Salaam.

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